

The anti-authoritarian populisms: a third current of populist ideologies in Tanzania (and Zimbabwe) and beyond

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Introduction

Populisms imagine struggles of below against above. Across the world, the struggles thus constructed as popular take different ideological forms. Left-wing populisms, for example, cluster in southern Europe¹ and Latin America.² Populist radical-right ideologies, it seems, are ubiquitous across the Western world and beyond.³ This article is about the ideological forms that they take in Africa. Until now, research has suggested that these struggles are concentrated in two ideological currents: liberation movements in power and radical-left oppositions. I ask: have any populisms in contemporary Africa remained hidden in plain sight? Have past studies mis-designated populisms as non-populisms? I focus on opposition parties. Studies of (supposedly) non-populist oppositions in Africa determine that most speak about one issue above others: democracy.⁴ I argue that within a subset of these opposition party messages, there is another, hitherto overlooked current of populisms in contemporary Africa: anti-authoritarian and democratic populisms, or anti-authoritarian populism for short.

An anti-authoritarian populism portrays an ‘authoritarian’ system as the source of popular hardships. It assembles ‘the people’ by connecting their hardships and joining their demands in unity against ‘the elite’, which in this imaginary sits atop the ‘authoritarian’ regime. It constructs ‘the people’s’ demands as ‘democracy.’ It presents a democratic system as an alternative to the existing authoritarian one, and as the means to relieve popular hardships. It fixes the signifier ‘democracy’ with content consistent with liberal democratic theory.

This body of anti-authoritarian populisms has gone unrecognized because previous studies have adopted a particular configuration of concepts. First, they have theorized populism as an *authoritarian* project, not an *anti-authoritarian* or indeed a democratic one. Second, Africanist studies in particular have theorized populism as a mobilization strategy which prioritizes socio-economic redistribution, not democracy. These conceptual choices make the combination of populist articulation and democratic subject-matter unthinkable. Two further such choices imply that even if anti-authoritarian populisms were conceivable, they would not be electorally viable. They render

¹ Yannis Stavrakakis and Giorgos Katsambekis, ‘Left-Wing Populism in the European Periphery: The Case of SYRIZA’, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 19, no. 2 (2014): 119–42.

² Carlos De La Torre, ‘Left-Wing Populism: Inclusion and Authoritarianism in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador’, *Bronn J. World Aff.* 23 (2016): 61.

³ Cas Mudde, *The Far Right Today* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).

⁴ Jaimie Bleck and Nicolas van de Walle, *Electoral Politics in Africa since 1990 Continuity in Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

democratic issues as insufficiently contested (i.e. valence issues) and too distant from the material concerns of citizens to possess mobilizational potential.

I advocate a different configuration of concepts. Populisms, I argue, need not be authoritarian and need not be about socio-economic redistribution. Anti-authoritarian populisms, moreover, construct democracy as a contested (i.e. positional) issue which is the gateway to improvements in material wellbeing. Therefore, anti-authoritarian populism *is* conceivable, and it *can* be electorally viable.

I apply these refashioned concepts to two cases. The principal case is that of Tanzania's leading opposition party: Chadema (*Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo* – Party of Democracy and Development). I analyse its evolving public-facing ideology, which began to take shape from 2007 and onwards. Past studies have concluded that its message principally carried democratic valence issues and was *not* populist.⁵ I challenge these prior interpretations. I argue that if one applies the reconfigured concepts described above, Chadema's message reveals both a populist mode of articulation and a democratic cause. In other words, it expressed a anti-authoritarian populism.

This study of opposition ideology in Africa's fifth-largest country is significant in its own right. Yet Chadema's ideology also has a wider significance. If past analyses of Chadema's message determined that it consisted of democratic valence issues, when it in fact contained a anti-authoritarian populism, might the same not be true of other opposition party messages similarly analysed? To explore the viability of this idea, I turn to a second case: the speech of Nelson Chamisa, who led Zimbabwe's leading opposition party Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC Alliance) from 2018 to 2021, and the Citizens' Coalition for Change (CCC) from 2022. Their speech has not previously been analyzed as populist. I argue that it too resembles a anti-authoritarian populism. This shows that the case of Chadema is not anomalous, and may be indicative of how other African opposition messages have been misinterpreted. In the final section, I outline what appears to be a wider body of anti-authoritarian and democratic populisms in Africa, of which these cases are representative. In failing to designate these struggles as populist, past research has left unrecognized that these democratic movements present their democratic struggles as ones of low against high. This not only misinterprets their ideologies but amounts to a significant omission from the global map of populist ideologies. In this article, I begin the work of correcting these omissions.

Of course, the proponents of such anti-authoritarian populisms, in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere, are more than capable of self-expression. This raises a question about the ethics of speaking for others.⁶ These ethical questions are amplified by the position of privilege from which I write. My answer to them is this: Chadema and CCC thinkers do not, to the best of my knowledge, understand their ideas as simultaneously democratic *and* populist. I identify the resemblances between their political thought and these academic constructs. This facilitates the

⁵ Dan Paget, 'Tanzania: Shrinking Space and Opposition Protest', *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 3 (2017): 153–67; Max Mmuyu and Amon Chaligha, *Political Parties and Democracy in Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1994).

⁶ Linda Alcoff, 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', *Cultural Critique*, no. 20 (1991): 5–32.

interpretation of their ideas and reveals that they merit the ascription ‘ideological’ in ways that have not been recognized hitherto.

For this analysis, I collected and analysed Chadema’s 2006 party constitution, its 2010 and 2015 manifestos, a handbook of party ideology, two 2014 conference speeches and the founding chairman’s autobiography. I further analysed transcripts of eight Chadema rallies from 2015, two available on YouTube and six which I attended and recorded. I conducted a discourse analysis of these texts. This involves identifying themes that run across them in an iterative process of theme-generating coding.⁷ I use this analysis to interpret the meanings they make.⁸ I offer a reconstruction of those meanings in the text below. I drew on eight years of sustained research about Chadema, including eight months of ethnographic field work in 2015. I interviewed 11 members of Chadema’s Central Committee and a further six high-level officials; 14 of its MPs and its nominated parliamentary candidates (of which, five Central Committee members); 86 of its active members and officials, spread across 35 party organs at the zonal, district, ward, branch and foundation-level. Finally, I have developed correspondences with several senior Chadema members and associated activists, some of whom have commented on prior drafts of this paper. I relied variously on a translation company and two research assistants (who wish to remain anonymous) to translate speeches and documents from Swahili which appear herein.

For the study of CCC, I principally analyse five major addresses given by Chamisa between 2018 and 2022.⁹ I selected these texts for prominence and relevance. They are in English and perhaps intended especially for elite, diasporic and international audiences. I conducted an equivalent, iterative qualitative discourse analysis of these texts. I have not done field research in Zimbabwe; this affects my ability to interpret these texts in context. I interpret them in the context of other texts.¹⁰ These include three further major addresses, three minor addresses, eight further press conferences and four television interviews by Chamisa. More widely, they include news coverage of Zimbabwean politics, and elite dialogue on social media. I have checked and refined my analysis with CCC officials.

In the first section, I review prior research, which recognizes few opposition populisms in contemporary Africa. In the second and third, I argue that anti-authoritarian populisms are conceivable and potentially electorally viable. In the fourth and fifth, I demonstrate that Chadema articulated an anti-authoritarian populism. In the sixth, I show that Chadema was not alone; Chamisa also articulated one. Finally, I consider the possibility that these are emblematic cases of a wider current of anti-authoritarian populisms in Africa.

⁷ Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁸ Charles Taylor, ‘Interpretation and the Sciences of Man’, in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Bradford Books, 1994).

⁹ These are: the ‘Turning Point’ Post-Election Address (2018), <https://youtu.be/f0MvHPEIMic>; Hope of the Nation Address (2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aroQtKTwrec>; Independence Address (2020), <https://youtu.be/BDfjZYTJCI>; Zimbabwe Agenda 2021 Address (2021), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYEWRBqbat8>; Zimbabwe Must be Cured Address (2022), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcGVDnugUKGE>.

¹⁰ Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* (London: Routledge, 2012).

Populism in Africa. The trend that wasn't?

In 2009, Lise Rakner and Nicolas van de Walle forecast that 'more and more' African opposition parties would become populist.¹¹ Thirteen years later, it is high time to take stock of opposition discourse and populism studies in Africa. Populism studies is theoretically diverse. I situate my approach at the juncture of ideology studies and discourse theory. Specifically, I draw on the theorization of ideology by Michael Freeden¹² and discourse by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (the discourse-theoretic perspective).¹³ Their theories intersect. They consider instantiations of ideologies to be systems of subjective meanings. These systems do not exhaust all the meanings which might be made, or all the things for which meanings might be made. Instead, they fix partial systems of meaning through key concepts or signifiers. Freeden and Laclau and Mouffe analyse different things in those meaning-systems. Freeden analyses how they fix meanings by arranging key concepts. For him, multiple meaning-systems are instantiations of the same ideology insofar as they fix meanings through the same key concepts.¹⁴ Laclau and Mouffe additionally analyse how the identities fixed in meaning-systems are assembled through logics of articulation. These logics capture how identities are built out of demands. 'Us' categories are knitted together by presenting many actors' demands as equivalent. 'Them' categories are created by hemming together those against whom demands are made. These two theoretical lenses are not mutually exclusive. Systems of meanings can be fixed simultaneously through arrangements of concepts and through the assembly of elements in logics of articulation.

I adopt the discourse-theoretic definition of populism: a meaning-system which a) divides the social into an 'us' and a 'them', and b) fixes their meanings through the signifiers 'the people' and 'the elite' respectively. This places 'people' and 'elite' them below and above an axis of hierarchy and power.¹⁵ I choose this definition over the similar ideational definition not because of any ontological differences over what sort of thing populism is, but because of their implications of the latter for populism and authoritarianism (see the next section).

A corpus of populisms has been identified in African party politics since the Third Wave. Most of them fall into two ideological currents. The instantiations of the first such current are located not in opposition, but in power.¹⁶ They include among their number: Jacob Zuma of South Africa,¹⁷

¹¹ Lise Rakner and Nicolas van de Walle, 'Opposition Weakness in Africa', *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 3 (2009): 108–21, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0096>.

¹² Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹³ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001).

¹⁴ Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*.

¹⁵ Benjamin De Cleen and Yannis Stavrakakis, 'Distinctions and Articulations: A Discourse Theoretical Framework for the Study of Populism and Nationalism', *Javnost - The Public* 24, no. 4 (October 2017): 301–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2017.1330083>.

¹⁶ Lesley White, 'Military Muscle and Populist Promises: Authoritarian Populism in Southern Africa', *Future Agricultures*, 20 March 2018, <https://www.future-agricultures.org/blog/military-muscle-and-populist-promises-authoritarian-populism-in-southern-africa/>; Zenobia Ismail, 'The Rise of Populism in Southern Africa's Dominant Party States', *OXPOL*, 9 March 2015, <https://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk/rise-populism-southern-africas-dominant-party-states/>.

¹⁷ Brunette, Ryan and Fogel, Benjamin, 'South Africa: From Populist Inertia to Insurrection', in *Populists and the Pandemic* (London: Routledge, 2022).

Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe;¹⁸ Yoweri Museveni of Uganda,¹⁹ and John Pombe Magufuli of Tanzania.²⁰ In one variation or another, they express liberation ideologies. The construct ‘liberation’ as a possible future destination for the nation.²¹ They invoke this destination to deny demands in the present. They locate this national liberation project within anti-imperialist struggles between their nation (alongside others) below and foreign enemies above. Some contest their ascription as populists.²²

The second, overlapping ideological current is the radical-left. Its contemporary exemplar is the Economic Freedom Fighters of South Africa.²³ However, other instantiations include Jacob Zuma, during his ANC-leadership campaign,²⁴ Kenneth Komba in Botswana,²⁵ and, disputedly,²⁶ Michael Sata in Zambia.²⁷ They construct ‘the people’ as united in their shared deprivation. They present those hardships as the consequence of exploitation by a local-international nexus of capital. They present governments as colluding partners or unwitting accomplices of capital. These ideologies meet in several places, but they separate in others, by invoking or deferring the satisfaction of demands, and by constructing leaders below or above. This leaves a remainder of three populisms in opposition: Raila Odinga’s fleeting ethnopolitism in Kenya,²⁸ Abdoulaye Wade youth populism in Senegal,²⁹ and Roberty Kyagulanyi’s (Bobi Wine) populism in Uganda. I discuss Wine in the conclusion. Altogether, research suggests that the expectations raised by Rakner and van de Walle have not been met. Only a fraction of opposition discourses have been designated as populist, mostly within one radical-left ideological canon. In fact, designations suggest that populisms in Africa is not a phenomenon of opposition more than of government.

¹⁸ Henning Melber, ‘Populism in Southern Africa under Liberation Movements as Governments’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 2018, 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2018.1500360>.

¹⁹ Giovanni Carbone, ‘“Populism” Visits Africa: The Case of Yoweri Museveni and No-Party Democracy in Uganda’, Crisis States Programme (London, 2005).

²⁰ Thabit Jacob and Rasmus Hundsbaek Pedersen, ‘New Resource Nationalism? Continuity and Change in Tanzania’s Extractive Industries’, *Extractive Industries and Society* 5, no. 2 (2018): 287–92, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2018.02.001>.

²¹ Alexander Beresford, ‘The Politics of Regenerative Nationalism in South Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38, no. 4 (2012): 863–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2012.744872>; Sara Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe: From Liberation to Authoritarianism* (London: Hurst, 2016); Dan Paget, ‘Again, Making Tanzania Great: Magufuli’s Restorationist Developmental Nationalism’, *Democratization* 27, no. 7 (June 2020): 1240–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1779223>.

²² Alastair Fraser, ‘Post-Populism in Zambia: Michael Sata’s Rise, Demise and Legacy’, *International Political Science Review* 38, no. 4 (2017); Dan Paget, ‘Mistaken for Populism: Magufuli, Ambiguity and Elitist Plebeianism in Tanzania’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2021, 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2020.1796345>.

²³ Marine Fölscher, Nicola de Jager, and Robert Nyenhuis, ‘Populist Parties Shifting the Political Discourse? A Case Study of the Economic Freedom Fighters in South Africa’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 59, no. 4 (2021): 535–58.

²⁴ Ari Sitas, ‘The Road to Polokwane? Politics and Populism in KwaZulu-Natal’, *Transformation* 68 (2008): 87–98.

²⁵ Danielle Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 190.

²⁶ Fraser, ‘Post-Populism in Zambia: Michael Sata’s Rise, Demise and Legacy’.

²⁷ Nic Cheeseman and Miles Larmer, ‘Ethnopolitism in Africa: Opposition Mobilization in Diverse and Unequal Societies’, *Democratization* 22, no. 1 (2015): 22–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.809065>.

²⁸ Cheeseman and Larmer.

²⁹ Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*.

Anti-authoritarian and democratic populisms

As few studies of opposition messages designate them as populist, logically, most studies, at least implicitly, designate them as non-populist. Instead, they analyse them as carriers of valence issues, especially about democracy.³⁰ Valence appeals are a type of programmatic appeals about public policies. In programmatic *positional* appeals, a party claims that they will deliver policies which, as they construct them, stand in contrast to those of rival parties. In programmatic *valence* appeals, parties claim that they are better able to deliver on some issue better than rival parties can. They make appeals by claiming superior competence. Jamie Bleck and Nicolas van de Walle study what such issues African political parties in a cross-sectional of countries mention most across two election cycles. They conclude that apart from ‘development’, opposition parties mention one issue more than others issues, and they mention it far more than ruling parties do: constitutionalism and democracy.³¹

This literature is ready for revision. I critically engage with these past analyses of democratic valence appeals. I argue that a subset of opposition messages thus analysed express populisms, populisms which those prior analyses miss. These opposition populisms amount to a third ideological current of populisms in contemporary Africa. In an anti-authoritarian populist imaginary, popular hardships are caused by ‘elite’ corruption and power. They in turn are enabled by an ‘authoritarian’ system of government. ‘The elite’ rules through that system, and continually develops it. Anti-authoritarian populisms assemble ‘the people’ below in reference to their common hardships and by uniting their demands in opposition to ‘the elite’ above. They construct their demands as ‘democracy.’ They set ‘democracy’ as a system of government which stands in opposition to the existing ‘authoritarian’ one. They characterize this ‘democratic system’ as *the* means to check ‘elite’ power, eliminate ‘elite’ corruption and alleviate ‘the people’s’ demands. They not only use the term ‘democracy’ as a signifier; they specify its meaning in accordance with liberal democratic theory. Therefore, anti-authoritarian populism is not reducible to democratic populism in the sense meant by radical democrats.³² The deployment of ‘authoritarianism’ as a signifier and investment of ‘democracy’ with liberal democratic theory distinguishes the two.

The recognition of this current and its constituent ideologies have been occluded by the ill configuration of two sets of concepts, which made meaning-systems that are both populist *and* democratic inconceivable. The first such configuration places populism in opposition to democracy. For some ideational and discursive theorists, populism contains an authoritarian project of power, not an anti-authoritarian one.³³ Nadia Urbinati theorizes populism as authoritarian project best.³⁴ Populists, she argues, claim that some faction, which they call ‘the people’, constitutes the whole. This ‘politics of partiality’ falsely renders ‘the people’ the sole legitimate part of society. ‘The people’s’ judgement, moreover, is collapsed onto their will, which is constructed as uniform, infallible, and knowable to ‘the leaders’ alone. Therefore, Urbinati

³⁰ Bleck and van de Walle, *Electoral Politics in Africa since 1990 Continuity in Change*.

³¹ Bleck and van de Walle.

³² Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (Routledge, 2011).

³³ Carlos de la Torre, ‘Latin American Populist Authoritarian Inclusion’, *Comparative Political Theory* 1, no. 2 (2021): 187–200; Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

³⁴ Nadia Urbinati, *Me the People: How Populism Transforms Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2019).

argues, populists ‘disfigure’ democratic theory. In office, they eliminate independent sites of opinion-formation, and they dismantle limits to their power. These ideas are echoed in recent Africanist studies of populism in discourse³⁵ and practice.³⁶

This theory of populism as democracy disfiguration has a valid claim to the term ‘populism’, but not the only such valid claim. As others argue, ideologies which construct a people/elite divide need not construct ‘the people’ as ‘the whole’, but simply as the many or ‘the plebs.’³⁷ Likewise, they need not claim that ‘the people’ are homogeneous; that their will is uniform or unchanging; or that ‘the leaders’ alone can divine it. Populisms, stripped of these democracy-disfiguring features, become meaning systems which construct an us/them divide between ‘the people’ (as plebs) below and ‘the elite’ above. This is closely corresponds to the conception of populism advanced by proponents of the discourse-theoretic perspective I articulated earlier. Thus conceived, populism need not but authoritarian.³⁸

This configuration of concepts removes one obstacle to making anti-authoritarian populisms thinkable. However, another remains. It arises from conceptions of populism as a strategy. Comparative studies theorize populism as a strategy of rule.³⁹ Africanist studies theorize it, distinctly, as a study of mobilization.⁴⁰ Specifically, Danielle Resnick conceives of populist mobilization strategy as a bundle of clientelist appeals, charismatic appeals by the leader, and programmatic appeals.⁴¹ These appeals particularly win the support of the (populous) intersection of young, urban and poor.

This conception of populist mobilization strategy becomes, by stealth, a distinct theory of populist ideology. It specifies properties of the meaning-systems which populists express and the programmatic policies which they adopt. The implication of Resnick’s conception, and others, is that populisms construct world views that privilege socio-economic inequality. They construct the ‘poor’ against ‘the political *and economic* elite [emphasis added]’⁴² or the ‘poor’ against the ‘wealthy’, all based on economic grievance.⁴³ They advocate, Resnick specifies, ‘a program of social inclusion’.⁴⁴ This program is ‘oriented around providing goods, services, and recognition to those

³⁵ Fölscher, de Jager, and Nyenhuis, ‘Populist Parties Shifting the Political Discourse? A Case Study of the Economic Freedom Fighters in South Africa’, 542–45.

³⁶ Melber, ‘Populism in Southern Africa under Liberation Movements as Governments’.

³⁷ Camila Vergara, ‘Populism as Plebeian Politics: Inequality, Domination, and Popular Empowerment’, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 2019.

³⁸ Vergara; Ian Scoones et al., ‘Emancipatory Rural Politics: Confronting Authoritarian Populism’, *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45, no. 1 (2018): 1–20.

³⁹ Kurt Weyland, ‘Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics’, *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (2001): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/422412>.

⁴⁰ Nic Cheeseman and Marja Hinfelaar, ‘Parties, Platforms, and Political Mobilization: The Zambian Presidential Election of 2008’, *African Affairs* 109, no. 434 (2009): 51–76, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adp070>.

⁴¹ Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*.

⁴² Resnick, 42–43.

⁴³ Nic Cheeseman and Miles Larmer, ‘Ethnopolitism in Africa: Opposition Mobilization in Diverse and Unequal Societies’, *Democratization* 22, no. 1 (2015): 23–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.809065>.

⁴⁴ Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*, 42.

who have been excluded.⁴⁵ In the words of others, it focuses on ‘economic issues’,⁴⁶ and promises to ‘radically improve living conditions.’⁴⁷

This specification of populism as mobilization strategy makes anti-authoritarian and democratic populisms as defined above impossible; if populisms must put socio-economic redistribution first, meaning-systems which put democracy first do not qualify. However, conventional theories of populism permit wider discursive range than this. Populists *can* construct redistribution and social inclusion as their causes,⁴⁸ but they need not. Equally, populists may construct ‘people’ vs. ‘elite’ as ‘poor’ vs. ‘wealthy’, but need not make these material identities their only or their principal ones. They can alternatively, or simultaneously, them as powerless vs. powerful or common vs. cultured, for instance.⁴⁹ Thus reconceived, ideologies that combine democratic causes and populist modes of articulation *are* conceptually possible.

Electoral viability

Even if analysts of populist as mobilization strategy accept that anti-authoritarian populisms are conceivable, they may remain sceptical any African opposition parties that adopt them will electorally viable.⁵⁰ Parsing these studies, they hold that populist opposition parties mobilize support from the young, urban poor by advocating programmatic policies which display two properties. First, they adopt positional policies which contain radical departures from the status quo. Second, they incorporate redistributive policies which quickly and substantially improve material conditions.⁵¹ There are two common concept-configurations, the implications of which are that any African parties which expressed anti-authoritarian populisms would not meet the aforementioned criteria, and so would lack electoral viability. Therefore, they would not be a source of potential opposition strength, as Rakner and van de Walle once hoped. I cannot determine whether populist strategies, thus defined, in fact lend parties electoral viability. Nonetheless, I do show that anti-authoritarian populisms can, and in some cases, do meet those criteria.

The first viability-dooming concept-configuration concerns valence appeals. Bleck and van de Walle oversee a slippage in definitions. Inadvertently, they fix a definition of democratic valence issues which is overly broad. In doing so, they narrow the domain of possible democratic positional appeals, and make it difficult to interpret democratic populist messages as positional. In their parsing of democratic valence issue discourse, they offer many text-book examples of valence

⁴⁵ Resnick, 42.

⁴⁶ Dan Paget, ‘Zambia’, in *Programmatic Politics: Final Report* (International IDEA, 2011), 105–22.

⁴⁷ Cheeseman and Larmer, ‘Ethnopolitism in Africa: Opposition Mobilization in Diverse and Unequal Societies’, 2015, 26.

⁴⁸ Cheeseman and Larmer, ‘Ethnopolitism in Africa: Opposition Mobilization in Diverse and Unequal Societies’, 2015; Paget, ‘Zambia’.

⁴⁹ De Cleen and Stavrakakis, ‘Distinctions and Articulations: A Discourse Theoretical Framework for the Study of Populism and Nationalism’.

⁵⁰ Cheeseman and Larmer, ‘Ethnopolitism in Africa: Opposition Mobilization in Diverse and Unequal Societies’, 2015; Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*; Rakner and van de Walle, ‘Opposition Weakness in Africa’.

⁵¹ Cheeseman and Larmer, ‘Ethnopolitism in Africa: Opposition Mobilization in Diverse and Unequal Societies’, 2015; Paget, ‘Zambia’; Resnick, *Urban Poverty and Party Populism in African Democracies*.

politics. For example, they describe how parties ‘leverage their relative position to champion’ democratic values’ and extol ‘their historic role’ in delivering democracy; these are appeals to competence and credibility.⁵² However, they also describe the following as democratic valence appeals: ‘Opposition actors frame themselves as defenders of democracy and criticize incumbents for actions perceived to limit freedoms or consolidate their own power.’⁵³ Such discourses are emphatically *not* valence appeals. They amount to claims that they, the opposition, are fighting *for* democracy, while the incumbent is acting *against* it. In other words, they put themselves and their opponents on *different sides* on the issue. They are better interpreted as a positional appeals.

Democratic populists speak about democracy in terms like these, with this qualification: the struggles they describe are more important and more intense. They claim that ‘the elite’ is opposed to democracy, wholesale. They allege that ‘the elite’ is dismantling democratic institutions or entrenching authoritarian ones. They advocate democratic systems of government as alternatives to these autocratic ones. These claims merit the designation as programmatic positional appeals, not valence ones. In fact, these anti-authoritarian and democratic populisms advocate programmes that are radical: they present their programmes as calls for root changes which overturn regimes and realize the sovereignty of the people as collective self-rule. Therefore, anti-authoritarian populisms certainly need not be doomed to electoral unviability for lack of positional appeals.

The second viability-doubting conceptual configuration is that democratic issues, unlike economically redistributive ones, for example, are distant from material wellbeing. Therefore, if an opposition did articulate a anti-authoritarian populism, it would be far-removed from the material issues which, it is thought, citizens care about most. However, anti-authoritarian populisms have a way of constructing democratic issues as immediately relevant to the material wellbeing of ‘the people’. It begins with the construction of ‘the elite’. Populists stitch-together a variety of everyday deprivations and hardships. Democratic populists choose three signifying threads for this task: corruption, domination and democracy. Like populists of many other ilks, they take corruption to be the ultimate source of this deprivation. What sets anti-authoritarian populisms apart is that they incorporate republican ideas about the sources of corruption. In their eyes, corruption is systemic; it is underpinned by systems of government that beget oligarchic domination, which in turn begets systemic corruption.⁵⁴ In Madisonian fashion, they advocate wholesale democratic reforms as the remedy for these ills. Specifically, they push for institutions which they envisage will divide state actors, limit their power and empower citizens. They see such democratic constitutions as the means to forever break elite domination and arrest systemic corruption. This, they claim, will resolve their hardships and to them the wealth that corrupt elites have continually extracted. Therefore, they construct democracy as the means to immediately improve ‘the people’s’ material wellbeing. Therefore, they need not be electorally unviable on these grounds either.

Therefore, studies of African opposition parties are ripe for revision. They designate most of their messages as simultaneously as non-populist and about democratic issues. However, these designations are based on fixations of concepts that make messages that are both populist and

⁵² Bleck and van de Walle, *Electoral Politics in Africa since 1990 Continuity in Change*, 9.

⁵³ Bleck and van de Walle, 9.

⁵⁴ For a review of republican ideas on corruption and oligarchic domination, see Camila Vergara, *Systemic Corruption: Constitutional Ideas for an Anti-Oligarchic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

about democracy inconceivable and electorally unviable. I contend that these fixations of concepts should be eschewed. Therefore, it is possible that there are anti-authoritarian populisms in Africa that have gone overlooked hitherto.

Tanzania: ‘The citizens’ again ‘the corrupt’

I explore this possibility by studying the message of Tanzania’s leading opposition party: Chadema. Chadema was founded by a network of businesspeople at the moment of Tanzania’s reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1992. Chadema’s ideology has been analysed as liberal,⁵⁵ meaning neo-liberal. Its founder-leaders prescribed competitive markets and fiscal conservatism as solutions to Tanzania’s problems. The election of Freeman Mbowe as chairman in 2004 marked a discursive shift which was taking shape by 2007. Chadema did not disavow its market liberalism.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it relegated it. Mbowe oversaw an overhaul of the party message. Past analyses judge that Chadema’s message in this period gave prominence to valence issues: anticorruption, democracy and resource nationalism.⁵⁷ In Bleck and van de Walle’s categories, the latter would qualify as a ‘sovereignty and international relations’ issue. The former two would qualify as ‘democracy and constitutionalism’ issues.

I am aware of two analysts that connect populism to Chadema. First, in passing, Sabatho Nyamsenda describes Chadema’s 2010 presidential candidate – Wilbroad Slaa – as populist.⁵⁸ Second, Maria Sarungi Tsehai writes that Chadema’s 2015 run would have been anti-establishment, but for their choice of presidential candidate.⁵⁹ These exceptions aside, research leaves unspoken the notion that it expressed a populist discourse.

Chadema’s revised message merits reinterpretation. Between 2006 and 2014, a succession of mega-corruption scandals broke in Tanzania.⁶⁰ Chadema – and others – belaboured the origins of these corrupt practices at the top. They called the instigators *majisadi* (the high-corrupt). Chadema characterized these instances as not independent, but connected. In 2007, then-Chadema Secretary-General Wilbroad Slaa published a ‘List of Shame’. It included nine presidents, prime ministers, ministers and civil servants. They, Slaa alleged, were the ultimate perpetrators of grand corruption. Singling out these high-placed rulers as perpetrators and hemming them together suggested that they formed an elite nexus that colluded to rule in its own interests. They located this elite nexus at the top of the ruling party, CCM (*Chama cha Mapinduzi* – Party of the Revolution). Later, Slaa described ‘a CCM corruption syndicate.’⁶¹ Parliamentary candidate Jesca Kishoa said that CCM leaders ‘cut deals to enrich themselves and their families’.⁶² Chadema linked the ability

⁵⁵ Max Mmuyu and Chaligha, *Political Parties and Democracy in Tanzania*, 61.

⁵⁶ Freeman Mbowe, ‘Speech by the Party Chairman to the General Conference’, 2014.

⁵⁷ Paget, ‘Tanzania: Shrinking Space and Opposition Protest’, 160–61.

⁵⁸ Sabatho Nyamsenda, ‘Tanzania: Will the 2020 General Elections Usher in a New Era of Elite Compromise?’, *Udadisi Blogspot*, 2020, <http://www.udadisi.org/2020/08/tanzania-will-2020-general-elections.html>.

⁵⁹ Maria Sarungi Tsehai, ‘The Rise of the Anti-Establishment’, 7 February 2016, <https://mariasarungitsehai.wordpress.com/2016/02/07/the-rise-of-the-anti-establishment/>.

⁶⁰ Hazel S. Gray, ‘The Political Economy of Grand Corruption in Tanzania’, *African Affairs* 114, no. 456 (2015): 382–403, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adv017>.

⁶¹ Wilbroad Slaa, ‘Report by the Secretary General on the Implementation of Party Activities from 2009 to 2014 to the Party’s National General Conference’, 2014.

⁶² ‘Rally for Chadema Parliamentary Candidate for Iramba, Jesca Kishoa’, *Field Notes*, October 2015.

of this nexus to enact corruption to its dominance of the state. Mbowe said that CCM maintained a permissive, top-dominated system of government ‘that allow[s] them to mismanage state resources for themselves.’⁶³

Chadema not only constructed a corrupt body above but a popular and wretched actor below: ‘the citizens’ (*wananchi*). Slaa said:

all of us are experiencing a very difficult life that has more than doubled for the ordinary person. The cost of living and specifically on basic needs: beans, charcoal and cooking gas are beyond the common man’s reach.⁶⁴

This popular suffering was placed in contrast to the luxurious lifestyles of the CCM-elite. For example, Kishoa vividly described CCM’s MP offering people gifts of \$0.3 beer, while later drinking \$10 whisky (currencies converted).

Chadema constructed this popular signifier in reference to the corrupt CCM-regime. They blamed CCM corruption for lacklustre government services, high taxes and even high prices. Then Chadema MP David Silinde said ‘Everything is expensive, a pair of shorts, kanga, everything; these are results of voting for CCM.’ [Myunga village E32]

The unity of ‘the citizens’ was constructed in reference to common hardships. Chadema rendered hardships as common through their shared material form, but also in reference to their common perpetrator: the CCM-elite. This closely resembled populist the logics of articulation theorized by Laclau. Silinde exemplified this logic of construction in his speech almost perfectly in dialogue with a rally audience.

Who's hurting there? (Audience: CITIZENS! Citizens are the victims). Who is injured here? (Audience: CITIZENS!) We are the ones suffers... and Chama Cha Mapinduzi is what destroys this country. [Silinde]

Moreover, as the above-mentioned quotes illustrate, the ‘citizens’ and ‘CCM’ were overlaid with several dimensions of low and high respectively. Therefore, contrary to prior analyses, Chadema’s message *was* populist.

Tanzania: Democracy as cause

Chadema’s populism was democratic. It called for ‘change’ (*mabadiliko*). The beauty of such a signifier, of course, is its flexibility. It can accommodate whatever meanings people choose to invest in it. Yet Chadema partially fixed its meaning as ‘democracy’ (*demokrasia*). It’s self-proclaimed vision was for ‘Tanzania to be a truly democratic country.’⁶⁵ For Chadema, the existing system of government enabled the dominant and elite corruption against while it railed. Chadema’s constitution states that ‘the systems and structures of governance in the country do not exist for the benefit of the people, but rather the... few people.’⁶⁶ In particular, the ‘constitution has remained a monopoly of the government.’⁶⁷ It saw these systems of governance as ‘the root cause

⁶³ Mbowe, ‘Speech by the Party Chairman to the General Conference’.

⁶⁴ Slaa, ‘Report by the Secretary General on the Implementation of Party Activities from 2009 to 2014 to the Party’s National General Conference’.

⁶⁵ Slaa.

⁶⁶ *Constitution of Chama Cha Demokrasia Na Maendeleo*, 2019th ed. (Dar es Salaam: Chadema, 2006), 15.

⁶⁷ *Constitution of Chama Cha Demokrasia Na Maendeleo*. 15

of our endemic poverty and our stalled development.’⁶⁸ Therefore, in its eyes, ‘for true and sustainable development to be obtained it is necessary that there are true changes and that there is true freedom in the governance system’.⁶⁹

Chadema fixed what it meant by ‘democracy’ as a series of specific policies and principles which it would implement. These includes the reduction of executive, especially presidential powers; the development of stronger parliament ‘with teeth’; and decentralisation of the government into zones. This democratic platform crystallized through the national constitutional process convened in 2012. A Constitutional Review Commission wrote two drafts. The second became known as the ‘Warioba Draft’ for its lead author, Joseph Warioba. Its contents reduced presidential powers, empowered the parliament, created a federal structure which empowered the archipelago state of Zanzibar, and enshrined various freedoms, among other things. Chadema (and other opposition parties) embraced the contents of this draft as their platform, wholesale. Therefore, adopted a populist mode of articulation and advocated a democratic cause simultaneously.

Chadema presented the Warioba Draft as an alternative to the existing ‘systems and structures of governance.’ This new constitution would ‘dismantle the entire corrupt system’.⁷⁰ They would do so by empowering ‘the people’ to discipline government. Chadema embraced a philosophy of ‘people’s power,’ which it codified in its constitution. In Chadema’s vision, ‘people power’ meant that ‘the [government] leadership can be owned, questioned and held accountable by the people through institutions put in place [and] by people through free and fair elections.’⁷¹ Therefore, the slate of democratic measures it proposed would check ‘CCM syndicate’ power with ‘people’s power.’ This in turn would arrest corruption. Chadema also envisaged this programme as the means to democratic sovereignty: collective self-rule. The party ideology handbook states that ‘the destiny of Tanzanians and their country... will be determined by the Tanzania peoples’ power and authority through democracy’. CCM, in its eyes, was ‘against democracy’.⁷² It was forever adopting more authoritarian measures.⁷³ Altogether, Chadema did not claim to have superior competence to *deliver* democracy. It portrayed its advocacy of ‘democracy’ as an alternative, both to the status quo and the CCM-regime’s direction of travel. Therefore, Chadema constructed ‘democracy’ not as a valence issue, but as a programmatic positional issue. It presented this platform as radical: the root-and-branch overhaul of CCM’s authoritarian system of government.

Chadema claimed that once these measures were implemented, Tanzanians suffering would be alleviated. Slaa said that these changes would put ‘decisions to plan and exploit opportunities in the country...in the people’s hands.’⁷⁴ Often, they suggested that vast resources that had enriched ‘the corrupt’ would flow to Tanzanians once democratic forms were introduced. In this vein, Mbowe said that ‘to put in place a constitution, which gives powers to the people is tantamount

⁶⁸ Chadema Manifesto 2010, quoted in: Chadema, *Foundations and Principles of Its Ideology, Philosophy and Policies Pertaining to Society, Economy and Politics*, 1st ed. (Dar es Salaam: Chadema, 2014), 25.

⁶⁹ Chadema Manifesto 2010, quoted in: Chadema, 25.

⁷⁰ Mbowe, ‘Speech by the Party Chairman to the General Conference’.

⁷¹ *Constitution of Chama Cha Demokrasia Na Maendeleo*.

⁷² Freeman Mbowe, ‘A Dangerous Shift Against Democracy in Tanzania’, *The Huffington Post*, August 2015.

⁷³ Mbowe.

⁷⁴ Slaa, ‘Report by the Secretary General on the Implementation of Party Activities from 2009 to 2014 to the Party’s National General Conference’.

to...using public resources for all Tanzanians'.⁷⁵ Edward Lowassa, the CCM defector turned 2015 Chadema presidential nominee, (who, ironically, was widely associated with grand corruption), painted a picture of how quickly the elimination of corruption could improve peoples' wellbeing. He said:

One man asked, where will you get the money? I told him the money is just there. All over Tanzania there is a lot of money. The whole government is full of money. Look at the type of cars they use. [Mbeya rally]

Therefore, in Chadema's eyes, 'democracy' was not distantly connected to everyday material wellbeing; on the contrary, it was the means to substantially and rapidly alleviate hardship and enrich Tanzanians.

Chadema not only presented 'democracy' as the solution to the sufferings of 'the citizens.' After the CCM-dominated Constitutional Assembly heavily revised the Warioba Draft constitution in 2013, Chadema presented this action as the denial of 'the people's' express wishes. This was far from clear. The Warioba Draft was written *after* far-reaching public consultations, but ultimately it was written *by* an expert committee. Nevertheless, Mbowe said that 'CCM and its government were not ready to respect people's views contained in the second [Warioba] draft constitution'.⁷⁶ Indeed, Chadema and three other opposition parties formed an alliance, entitled *Umoja wa Katiba ya Wananchi* (UKAWA), or 'Coalition for the People's Constitution.' Slaa described UKAWA as engaged in a 'relentless fight for a people's centred constitution.'⁷⁷ In other words, Chadema constructed its democratic cause as the fight against the CCM-elite to realize 'the people's will.'

In sum, Chadema constructed a anti-authoritarian populism. 'Democracy,' it claimed, was the will of 'the citizens'. It advocated this cause with and for them against the 'CCM syndicate.' This opposition populism passes the litmus tests of electoral viability that prior research provides; it presented 'democracy' as a side-taking issue, and as the means to substantially improve their material wellbeing.

My analysis focuses on the period till 2015 when by primary research ended. Prior analyses conclude that in 2015, Chadema's message changed. That August, it nominated the aforementioned CCM-defector Lowassa as its presidential candidate. Months later, CCM candidate John Pombe Magufuli was elected president and began a performative anti-corruption war. These events undermined Chadema's anti-corruption credentials. In response, Chadema temporarily relegated its critique of elite corruption.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, Chadema continued to portray the CCM regime as the source of citizen hardship. Magufuli began a much-documented authoritarian turn.⁷⁹ Chadema portrayed Magufuli as a 'petty

⁷⁵ Mbowe, 'Speech by the Party Chairman to the General Conference'.

⁷⁶ Mbowe.

⁷⁷ Slaa, 'Report by the Secretary General on the Implementation of Party Activities from 2009 to 2014 to the Party's National General Conference'.

⁷⁸ Paget, 'Tanzania: Shrinking Space and Opposition Protest'.

⁷⁹ Paget.

dictator' (*dikteta uchwara*) atop an authoritarian regime. Tundu Lissu, Chadema's 2020 presidential candidate characterized this regime as an arbitrary marauder. He particularly emphasized that it imposed 'extortionist' tax raids - 'mafia-style shakedowns' - with 'shocking brutality'.⁸⁰ This, he claimed, put the economy 'on life support'.⁸¹ In this context, Chadema made democracy even more central to its cause. It continued to present it as the antidote to citizen hardships. Democracy, it claimed would check the regime's arbitrary predation. Democracy, though, faced an existential threat. Chadema claimed that Magufuli had 'launched an open, unapologetic and unrelenting onslaught on democracy'.⁸² Lissu portrayed the 2020 election as 'the outright capture of the election' through mass violence and fraud.⁸³ Since 2020, Chadema has intensified its calls for wholesale constitutional reform. Therefore, since 2015, Chadema's message has altered but this alteration has only intensified its anti-authoritarian populism.

Zimbabwe: 'People's struggle' for democracy

Analyses of MDC (and its most prominent splinter-descendants: MDC-Tsvangirai, MDC Alliance and CCC) agree that it subscribes to a liberal democratic ideology.⁸⁴ However, analyses of its recent public message differ, especially regarding its message in the 2013 election. Some judge that its message is 'issue based'.⁸⁵ It principally claims superior ability to deliver on issues of material wellbeing such as jobs, economic management and public service delivery in 2013⁸⁶ and since.⁸⁷ Others claim that its message prioritized issues of democracy and human rights *over* such material issues.⁸⁸ In either case, like past analyses of Chadema's message, they offer interpretation centred on valence appeals, not populism. Indeed, implicitly, the emphasis on its 'liberal' and 'technocratic language'⁸⁹ connotes that there is distance between its message and populism. Gift Mwonozora and Obert Hodzi analyse Chamisa's 2018 'narrative' as populist.⁹⁰ So do some commentators.⁹¹ However, they do so principally in pejorative reference to his mode of intra-party factional politics and his evangelicalism, rather than his public-facing and anti-regime message.⁹²

⁸⁰ Tundu Lissu, 'Tanzania, a Nation at a Crossroads', *Daily Maverick*, 8 June 2020, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-06-08-tanzania-a-nation-at-the-crossroads/>.

⁸¹ Lissu.

⁸² For a Chadema view on this assault, see Mwesiga Baregu, 'Shrinking Freedom Spaces in Tanzania', *Citizen*, 21 March 2018.

⁸³ 'Tundu Lissu and Zitto Kabwe International Press Conference', *Nadj Media Centre*, November 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMt_niucc9M&feature=youtu.be.

⁸⁴ Julia Gallagher and Stephen Chan, *Why Mugabe Won: The 2013 Zimbabwean Elections and Their Aftermath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁸⁵ Phillan Zamchiya, 'The MDC-T's (Un)Seeing Eye in Zimbabwe's 2013 Harmonised Elections: A Technical Knockout', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 4 (2013): 956, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2013.858546>.

⁸⁶ Zamchiya, 'The MDC-T's (Un)Seeing Eye in Zimbabwe's 2013 Harmonised Elections: A Technical Knockout'.

⁸⁷ Nicole Beardsworth, Nic Cheeseman, and Simukai Tinhu, 'Zimbabwe: The Coup That Never Was, and the Election That Could Have Been', *African Affairs* 118, no. 472 (July 2019): 589–90, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adz009>.

⁸⁸ Gallagher and Chan, *Why Mugabe Won: The 2013 Zimbabwean Elections and Their Aftermath*.

⁸⁹ Zamchiya, 'The MDC-T's (Un)Seeing Eye in Zimbabwe's 2013 Harmonised Elections: A Technical Knockout', 957.

⁹⁰ Gift Mwonozora and Obert Hodzi, 'Movement for Democratic Change and the Rise of Nelson Chamisa', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 56, no. 2 (2021): 251–66.

⁹¹ David Tinashe Hofisi, 'High Court Ruling against Nelson Chamisa: The Battle of Populism vs Constitutionalism', *New Zimbabwe*, 11 May 2019, <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/high-court-ruling-against-nelson-chamisa-the-battle-of-populism-vs-constitutionalism/>; Nkomo Melusi, 'The Nelson Chamisa Chimera in Zimbabwe', *Africa Is a Country*, June 2018, <https://africasacountry.com/2018/06/the-nelson-chamisa-chimera-and-the-opposition-in-zimbabwe>.

⁹² Mwonozora and Hodzi, 'Movement for Democratic Change and the Rise of Nelson Chamisa'.

In this section, I analyse Chamisa's discourse from August 2018 to March 2022, through the addresses and other texts described in the introduction. I show that Chamisa articulated a anti-authoritarian populism that displays remarkably close resemblances to Chadema's. This is not to say that Chamisa's discourse is reducible to either an imitation of Chadema's or a anti-authoritarian populism alone. Chamisa's speech changed during this period and varies across these texts. It also displayed features and idiosyncrasies which Chadema's did not, some of which I draw out. For focus, and brevity, I do not unpick all of these changes or idiosyncrasies.

Like Chadema, Chamisa consistently portrayed Zimbabweans and Zimbabwe as suffering from an omnibus of hardships. 'I know that you are suffering. I know that you have no grants, you have no fuel, you have no power, no food, there is no money, we have no jobs.'⁹³ In a close likeness of a discourse-theoretic logic of articulation, he connected the suffering of many diverse peoples.

Businesses have suffered... workers have been retrenched. For years, youth and war veterans have received empty promises.⁹⁴

Distinct from Chadema, he set this suffering in contrast to the 'glory days' of Zimbabwean independence.⁹⁵

Like Chadema, Chamisa also consistently singled out the party regime as the source of this suffering. 'Not one single citizen is not a victim of our government. You have a grievance against the government because of being driven into deadening poverty.'⁹⁶ The Zimbabwean African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), he said, also doled out violent oppression to its citizens which amounted, he said, to a parallel 'pandemic.'⁹⁷

ZANU-PF, he claimed, also perpetrated corruption in a myriad of forms to enrich itself at the expense of all others. 'We are all,' he said 'in extreme poverty, but we have a minority that is enjoying the cream of our country.'⁹⁸ This 'hell on Earth,' he said, was 'the result of corruption, bad governance, human rights abuses, [and] failed reforms.'⁹⁹ Chamisa emphasized that this 'corruption starts at the top.'¹⁰⁰ He described 'rotten pinnacle' of the state which had been captured by 'parasitic elites who are bent on rent-seeking, racketeering, and... exploiting the poor.'¹⁰¹ This elite enjoyed the luxury and privilege of '5-star hotels five-star hospitals'.¹⁰²

Like Chadema, and consistent with his MDC forebears, Chamisa advocated democracy constitutionalism as the remedy to all of these ills. To this end, he advocated 'a raft of political

⁹³ Cure, 2022.

⁹⁴ Cure, 2022.

⁹⁵ Independence, 2020.

⁹⁶ Cure, 2022.

⁹⁷ Agenda 2021.

⁹⁸ Cure, 2022.

⁹⁹ HONA, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Agenda, 2021.

¹⁰¹ Cure, 2022.

¹⁰² HONA, 2019.

reforms.¹⁰³ Like Chadema, Chamisa characterized the nation as abundant in natural resources which would be released from the clutches of the corrupt regime once these democratic reforms were instituted. ‘God bless us with all these resources... a blessing that will benefit all the citizen dividends.’¹⁰⁴ He also claimed, like Chadema post-2015, that democracy would facilitate a cascade of foreign investors. He promised that ‘resources will come here.’¹⁰⁵ However, he warned, ‘as long as the oppressors suffer from the legitimacy deficit... the country will continue to struggle to attract serious investors.’¹⁰⁶

Constitutional democracy would also usher in a wider programme of what he, like his MDC forebears,¹⁰⁷ called ‘change.’ ‘Change’ as the MDC Alliance name specified, meant democratic change. Like Chadema, he portrayed the struggle for democracy as a liberation struggle.¹⁰⁸ More than Chadema, he ostentatiously appropriated the language of liberation. ‘The liberation ethos,’ he claimed, had always been ‘one man, one vote.’¹⁰⁹ Therefore, ‘the liberation struggle was a democratic project.’¹¹⁰ This should be read in the context of ZANU-PF increasingly reviving the language of liberation to delegitimize the opposition.¹¹¹

The ‘struggle of democratization,’¹¹² was, he claimed ‘a people’s struggle,’¹¹³ a new ‘citizen consensus.’¹¹⁴ He not only constructed ‘people’ and ‘citizens’ by connecting their hardships, as described above. He also assembled them by summoning them to unite in struggle.

It's about you the citizens. Are you a professional? Do something. Are you a builder? Do something. Are you a worker? Do something. Are you a student? Do something.¹¹⁵

This ‘convergence’ of people formed the Citizens Coalition for Change: the re-founded party launched in 2022. Even before this moment, he had presented his party as a vehicle for the people’s struggle. ‘It is your party; it is your struggle.’¹¹⁶

Chamisa, like Chadema, claimed that the party-regime stood opposed to democracy. ‘The regime and the oppressors,’ they said, ‘have embarked on a relentless assault and onslaught upon democracy and upon the people's party.’¹¹⁷ He declared that the regime’s authoritarian opposition to this coalition amounted to resistance of the will of the citizens. In 2018, he portrayed the

¹⁰³ Agenda, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Agenda, 2021.

¹⁰⁵ HONA, 2019.

¹⁰⁶ Agenda, 2021.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter 5 of Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe: From Liberation to Authoritarianism*.

¹⁰⁸ For a study of prior contestations of Zimbabwean liberation discourses, see Dorman. Chapter 5

¹⁰⁹ Turning Point, 2019.

¹¹⁰ Independence, 2020.

¹¹¹ Dorman, *Understanding Zimbabwe: From Liberation to Authoritarianism*; Blessing Miles Tendi, ‘Robert Mugabe’s 2013 Presidential Election Campaign’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 4 (2013): 963–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2013.858537>.

¹¹² HONA, 2021.

¹¹³ HONA, 2021.

¹¹⁴ Agenda, 2021; Cure, 2022.

¹¹⁵ Cure, 2022.

¹¹⁶ Agenda, 2021.

¹¹⁷ Agenda, 2021.

[alleged] manipulation¹¹⁸ of the 2018 election as a ‘coup against the will of the people’ intended to ‘advantage a particular elite.’¹¹⁹

Therefore, there were important features of Chamisa’s ideology that mark it apart from Chadema’s. Nevertheless, it evidently, abundantly shares the features of anti-authoritarian populism theorized above and displayed by Chadema.

A third current of populisms in contemporary Africa?

Chadema public message did not disfigure democracy. Nor did it advocate a programme of socio-economic redistribution. Nevertheless, the system of meaning constructed in its public speech was undeniably populist. While doing so, it made gains in two elections.¹²⁰ I have argued that these facts should not be thought of as mutually contradictory. Populist articulation *can* be combined with democratic cause.

Chadema’s anti-authoritarian and democratic populism does not fall into either the radical-leftist or liberation ideologies sometimes analysed as populist in Africa. However, this does not mean that it is an outlier. On the contrary, my analysis of Chamisa’s discourse shows that it is not. Therefore, there is not just a theoretical, but an empirical basis to conclude that there is a third current of populist ideologies in Africa. If Chadema and the CCC are the first two recognized instances of this current, there is a clear candidate for the third. Forthcoming work by Luke Melchiorre argues that Bobi Wine’s People Power Movement (PPM) in Uganda constructs a struggle for democracy between youth and President Yoweri Museveni which closely resembles anti-authoritarian populisms as theorized here.¹²¹ These movements not only demonstrate that anti-authoritarian populism is possible. They also illustrate that such movements *can* be electorally viable. None has won elections in the official results, but each has won substantial portions of votes under conditions of oppression. This illustrates, at the very least, that such messages are not necessarily unviable.

The question remains how wide this current of anti-authoritarian populisms is. Future research should take up this question. It should begin with the opposition party messages analysed as democratic valence issues. It research should prioritize the study of opposition parties operating under liberation regimes.¹²² Chadema, CCC and PPM all operate under such regimes. They are linked by this shared regional context.¹²³ However, such research should not be bound to liberation regimes, or to party politics. The social movement which emerged in Ghana around the hashtag #FixtheCountry, seems to illustrate that anti-authoritarian democratic populism can be found beyond both.

¹¹⁸ Beardsworth, Cheeseman, and Tinhu, ‘Zimbabwe: The Coup That Never Was, and the Election That Could Have Been’.

¹¹⁹ Turning Point, 2018.

¹²⁰ It made progress in 2010 and 2015 elections. Its showing in the 2020 election is difficult to determine due to rigging. See Dan Paget, ‘Tanzania: The Authoritarian Landslide’, *Journal of Democracy* 32, no. 2 (2021): 67–76.

¹²¹ For an outline, see Luke Melchiorre, ‘The Generational Populism of Bobi Wine’, *Review of African Political Economy Blog*, 12 February 2021, <https://roape.net/2021/02/12/the-generational-populism-of-bobi-wine/>.

¹²² Sara Dorman, ‘Post-Liberation Politics in Africa: Examining the Political Legacy of Struggle’, *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 6 (2006): 1085–1101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590600842365>.

¹²³ Dorman.

More widely, this articles illustrates how political ideologies can be hidden in plain sight. They may inhere in street-speeches and performative actions, rather than texts, but, nevertheless, they may be abundant.